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ABSTRACT

This paper assesses the problems faced in teaching history in the junior college classroom and the promise of and possibilities for new departures in the instructor's role. The problems are seen as: 1) the question of emphasis within the junior college curriculum; 2) the widespread vocational-technical orientation of students and administrators; and, 3) the relationship between the history courses offered on the junior college level and what the senior degree-granting institutions will accept from the transferring student. The promise and possibilities are seen as basically the general willingness of junior college trustees and administrators to supply the materials necessary for instructional innovation, and to accept experimentation in instruction. The paper offers suggestions and resources for the development of new instructional materials and calls for diversity in methodology and technique. It concludes by posing a number of questions which must be answered before teaching of history and the connected problems may be clarified. One suggestion is for the American Historical Association to sponsor a study of history in the junior college classroom. (Author/DJB)

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HISTORY IN THE JUNIOR COLLEGE CLASSROOM: PROBLEMS AND PROMISE

James W. Hurst

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While much has been written about the educational processes in both the elementary and secondary schools, little in the way of serious analysis has been done for the junior or community college.[1] This is especially true for history as an academic discipline. Indeed, there seems to be a great deal of confusion about the two-year college. In 1969, on the Fiftieth anniversary of the American Association of Junior Colleges, the Association President spoke of "...the rapidly multiplying community college -- 54 new ones last year, to total 1,000 by 1972 when more than half of the country's college population will be in that kind of school-- public, free, tax-supported, locally and vocationally oriented, serving a commuting student body with open door admissions for most."[2] (The October, 1971 issue of the Illinois Association of Community and Junior Colleges Faculty Division Newsletter indicates the nation now has 1,091 community colleges enrolling about two and one-half million students. The next twelve months will see the establishment of thirty to forty more, and predictions are that the pace will continue for the next five to ten years.) In reading recent literature dealing with junior colleges, one cannot fail to be impressed with the recurrence of such words as mission, movement, newness, and uniqueness; or such phrases as mission fulfillment, unique opportunities, and frontier institution. The present Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare has seen the community college as"...career centers for young

Americans (which are) oriented to the new technology, to the practical sciences."[3] The junior college has been seen as a separate educational entity,"...a new kind of college, integrated into the pattern of higher education, and offering broad programs, valuable in themselves."[4] Another observer has seen the junior college as the institution to affect the "...conquering of intellectual snobbery-- the attitude that only academic learning is worthwhile."[5] Yet another observer has seen the junior college as an institution "...providing an overflow receptacle for those whom the universities are unwilling or unable to serve."[6] I say this to you by way of introduction to history in the junior college classroom-- that is, in the classroom of an institution suffering from something of an emphasis crisis. For while the <u>function</u> of the junior college has over the years been fairly well established (i. e., to provide courses for students transferring to degree-granting institutions; to provide vocational-technical training; and to provide community-service courses), the <u>emphasis</u> given the courses of study within the curriculum has not.

Vocational, "career", community-service, and para-professional courses compete for space, time, and money with the traditional, liberal and academic courses. Job and career-oriented students are increasingly reluctant to take courses which do not clearly contribute to their vocational aims. Were it not for the lower division undergraduate requirements of our senior institutions, it is questionable how many junior college students would even bother to enroll in history courses. As senior institutions, tiring of expending their space, money, and the energy of

their historians on lower division survey courses drop the traditional history requirements, the situation for junior college transfer students changes-- as does history in the community college classroom.

It follows that presently the future of history in the junior college (insofar as transfer students are concerned) is linked-- one is inclined to say chained-- to the degree-granting senior institution. As the universities raise or lower their hour requirements, they help determine the nature of junior college offerings. In the past and up to the present, the mainstay of the junior college history offerings have been Western Civilization and American History. Recently courses dealing with the history of Black America have been developed, and other courses have appeared representing the training and interests of staff members. It may be worth noting that while the future of history as a classroom disipline in the community college depends to a large extent on the requirements of senior degree-granting institutions, the growth of history as a classroom discipline may depend not so much on the transfer student as upon the attraction to the subject of students not normally required to take a prescribed number of history hours. The primary guideline for the development of history courses has been and continues to be, however, the requirements of the senior institutions. Secondary guidelines, it may be suggested, should reflect 1) the training, interests, and competence of the staff involved; 2) the availability of learning resourses for the use of the students involved; 3) the time and space available within the college schedule; and, of course, 4) the willingness of trustees, administrators, and staff to pursue innovation.

Since junior colleges tend to see themselves as above all teaching institutions, innovation in classroom methods is generally welcomed and materials generously supplied (especially if the methods and materials can substantially increase the number of students for which the instructor will be responsible). Most of us remember, and are probably ourselves examples of, the almost universal method of teaching undergraduates in American colleges and universities-- lecture, reading assignment, discussion, and examination (or some combination thereof). What we have probably realized lately, however is that this time-honored technique is not as successful as we once thought it was. While in defense of the past it may be remarked that traditional methods succeeded, it should also be pointed out that they succeeded best with traditional students.[7] And whatever else they are or may be, junior college students are not in the traditional role-- that is, they are generally not high in verbal ability and reading comprehension; they are not oriented to the printed word or studious habits; they are oriented to occupational security and the consumer society. If we recognize that we are not dealing with traditional students, and if we believe that history has something to offer the general student and is not the property of an intellectual elite, we may find ourselves becoming more interested in new teaching departures.

We have, perhaps, become too concerned with the transmission of knowledge rather than with the reception of learning, too concerned with mastery of prescribed content at the expense of general intellectual growth. Richard Livingstone, the Oxford classicist, wrote, "There are two types of teachers to whom we have reason to be grateful. There are those who teach us facts, who introduce us

in a methodical way to a subject, lay solid foundations in it, and on these foundations raise the tower of knowledge, foursquare and firmly built. We owe much to them. But there is another, rarer type, to whom we owe more still-- those teachers who have an attitude to life, an outlook on the world, that we have not met before, who open our eyes to a new point of view and teach us to see life in a new way. That is the most valuable education one ever gets;..."[8] Sir Richard was referring to the Greeks of antiquity and to the value of the Greek experience for men in modern society. I think that his remarks relate as well to history as a classroom discipline. History can be that rarer type of teacher, and it may now be time to direct our energies to enhancing curiosity, to developing the ability to examine critically, to innovate, and hopefully, to improve.[9] And since there is no way clearly to determine which students will be terminal ones and which will be going on to complete a four-year undergraduate program, it has been suggested that our history offerings be flexible enough to "...accommodate the interests of a wide range of participating students."[10] Possibly the flexibility may be found in new materials and new methods of instruction.

One of the most obvious sources of generally overlooked materials is in local history. Local or county historical societies, newspaper files, courthouse records, local library collections, diaries or records of pioneer families, and public and private institutional archives should provide much that is intellectually stimulating. State historical societies are usually most cooperative and quick to offer sources and suggestions, and local history

provides, perhaps, our best opportunity to introduce the student to primary source material. There is much of historical value in our local areas, and there seems to be no reason why our students cannot contribute to its preservation. The techniques of oral history could be implemented here and students, through the taped interview, could add a new dimension to the history of their locality. Local history could be incorporated in the standard American history survey course, offered as a course in its own right, or presented as an Honors Seminar within the Social Science Department.[11] The American Association for State and Local History has recently released a "Seminar Lecture Series" of cassette tapes dealing with such subjects as oral history, architectural research, historical museums, and historical photographs. The Association publishes History News each month and provides members with bulletins, technical leaflets, and other relevant materials.

Microfilm is another often overlooked source. Copies of newspapers (local, national, and international), magazines, periodicals, and scholarly journals are all available, much on interlibrary loan from university libraries. The University Microfilms series of doctoral dissertations might well be used to introduce students to scholarship in special fields of interest;[12] they are also valuable introductions to the mechanics of citation, bibliography and its function, and the techniques of analytical presentation and significant scholarly conclusion. Projection of microfilm on a classroom screen enables larger numbers to use a given document or essay, and often serves as a device to stimulate discussion.

The development of relatively inexpensive tape recorders, players and cassettes presents other possibilities. Duplicate cassettes of taped speeches, lectures, discussions, or other worthwhile programs may be placed on reserve in the library or audio-visual center (or instructional media centers, as I think they prefer being called today) and checked out by students for use at their convenience. Large numbers of commercially prepared tapes are available. The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, California, produces a wide variety of taped lectures, discussions, and other programs suitable for use in the classroom. Sussex Tapes of London, England, has produced a series of taped dialogs between leading British scholars discussing key issues and controversies of British history. Taped discussions with university historians may be used to provide insights into the nature of the historian's work while at the same time introducing students to opportunities available in the profession. Video-tape quite literally adds another dimension here, and while it is more expensive than cassette or spool tapes, its potential as an educative device makes its use, when and where possible, worth consideration.

Thirty-five millimeter close-up photography provides another avenue for exploration in the creation of new materials for classroom use. Maps, charts, graphs, old photographs, art objects, artifacts, archaelogical excavations, letters, and documents-- a virtually endless source of visual presentations can be assembled and used in an educational manner. Old pictorial histories are particularly rich in source material, as are old catalogs and magazines.

The computer is apparently becoming one of the more glamorous devices available as both a source of material and as a teaching tool. Aside from the more obvious uses in objective testing, test item analysis, and individual student print-outs of test results, the computer may be used to introduce the student to the methodology of quantitative analysis in history. Quantification is currently enjoying great popularity, and an admirable introduction may be found in Doller and Jensen's Historian's Guide to Statistics.[13] Students may wish to try quantitative techniques of their own, using state and local election results, voter registration records, draft board induction figures, or even the records available from the registrar's office. Professional and scholarly history journals are carrying more of a quantitative nature, historians and their graduate students are turning more toward quantification, and much that is interesting and controversial is developing. The Times Literary Supplement recently began a series of articles on quantification which may prove helpful to both student and instructor.[14]

While the development of new history materials is really limited only by the imagination of the instructor and the budget of his school or department, the question of classroom methods is a vexing one. It may be safely asserted, I think, that nothing more quickly angers us than the suggestion that our teaching methods leave something to be desired (unless, perhaps, it is the suggestion that our methods of instruction might possibly be improved). Believing firmly that discretion is the better part of valor, I will make no such assertion, but merely indicate what I think we

all know-- we have all grown accustomed to the methods we have and are reluctant to change. Remaining unconvinced that there is a Royal Road to learning and while claiming no particular expertise in methodology, I should like here to suggest a simple guideline-- diversity.

Since hour loads are quite heavy in junior colleges-- twelve to sixteen semester hours seems to be the rule-- the traditional lecture is not always desirable. The instructor may find it more practical to tape his key lectures and place them on reserve in the library or media center where they may be used by the student at his convenience. Guides to the lectures designed to meet the instructor's objectives may be provided to assist the student. Slide presentations, keyed to a tape or supplementing a classroom discussion are useful and instructive. Time spent on the presentation of written, critical book reviews by students in class may prove an effective device for stimulating discussion, especially if all have read the same book and have their own ideas and interpretations. Since most students, particularly freshmen, seem to have had experience only in producing written summaries of the contents of books, time spent in introducing them to the critical review will not be wasted. An excellent tool here is Cantor and Schneider's How to Study History.[15] For the student who may wish to do research and writing, history Jackdaws (reproductions of primary sources dealing with topics and events from antiquity to the present) will provide a formidable challenge.[16] Videotaped lectures of discussions are an excellent way to make use of the various specialized interests and talents of staff members who may

otherwise not be able to participate. Xeroxed copies of articles from history journals form an excellent foundation upon which to build individual reports, group discussions, and debates while at the same time introducing students to the latest in scholarship and scholarly debate. Recent film offerings have been so numerous as to preclude mention here, but to overlook them is to miss some really worthwhile teaching tools. Other and more specialized methods of classroom instruction which have been used and have been seen as worthwhile are discussed at length in the various issues of the Junior College Journal.[17] The new Community College Social Science Quarterly shows promise of becoming a most helpful journal for junior college instructors.

The suggestion to the Program Chairman which resulted in this brief paper was prompted by a letter to the AHA Newsletter expressing dissatisfaction with recent convention offerings and indicating concern over the future of history as an academic discipline in the classroom.[18] From the point of view of this junior college histroy instructor, the criticism was well directed. The future of history in the classroom is too important to be left to those outside the profession. We need to know why, following the growth of the 60's, enrollments in history courses are declining among our undergraduates. Is it because of the shrinking job market on all levels of public education? Indeed, what is the nature of change in the academic marketplace? Is our methodology, or lack of it, driving students from us? Do we really know what our students think of the teaching of history? Is history in the classroom in danger of being de-emphasized because it can be and often

is a discipline of social challenge as well as an inculcator of social docility? These few questions, and many more, must be both asked and answered if we are to begin to understand the problems we face.

Those of us in the junior colleges have much to do. The community college is the fastest growing segment of higher education and yet, as was pointed out earlier, not much is known about it and probably even less is known about the fortunes of history in the junior college classroom. What is the nature and extent of history course offerings in our community colleges? What courses <u>should</u> the junior colleges be offering? Who teaches history in the junior college classroom? What constitutes adequate training for the classroom history instructor? The history department at Illinois State University is preparing a program designed specially for the junior college history instructor. Hopefully, that program will enable us to answer some of our questions. As opportunities for university research appointments diminish, more and more neophyte historians may find themselves looking to the community colleges. And few, indeed, are aware of the possibilities and the problems of history in the two-year colleges. The Commission on College Geography of the Association of American Geographers has seen fit to study the place of geography in the two-year college; the Modern Language Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the American Association of Junior Colleges have produced a similar study of English in the junior college.[19] I should like to suggest that it is time for our professional organization to do the same.

Footnotes

[1]Arthur M. Cohen, "Stretching Pre-College Education", Social Policy, II:1 (May/June, 1971), p. 6.

[2]Everett M. Woodman, "Our Message and Our Mandate", Junior College Journal, 40:1 (September, 1969), p. 7.

[3]Robert H. Finch, "Career Education: A Program for Community Colleges", Junior College Journal, 40:3 (November, 1969), p. 12.

[4]Ken August Brunner, "Historical Development of the Junior College Philosophy", Junior College Journal, 40:7 (April, 1970), p. 34.

[5]Maurice L. Avram, "Opportunities in the 70s", Junior College Journal, 40:3 (November, 1969), p. 11.

[6]Cohen, op. cit.

[7]John E. Rouche and Barton R. Herrscher, "A Learning Oriented System of Instruction", Junior College Journal, 41:2 (October, 1970), passim.

[8]Richard Livingstone, "The Rainbow Bridge", Atlantic, (November, 1957), p. 175

[9]Ben F. Wheeles, "Independent Study at Sullins", Junior College Journal, 41:2 (October, 1970), passim.

[10]Robert A. Waller, "Survey vs. Seminar in History", Junior College Journal, 40:5 (February, 1970), p. 31.

[11]Clay M. Fletcher, "An Honors Seminar for the Social Sciences", Junior College Journal, 40:5 (February, 1970), passim.

[12]The Datrix (Direct Access to Reference Information) service is available from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

[13]Charles M. Dollar and Richard J. Jensen, Historian's Guide to Statistics (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1971).

[14]See The Times Literary Supplement series beginning with W. G. Runciman, "Thinking By Numbers: 1", TLS, August 6, 1971.

[15]Norman E. Kantor and Richard I. Schneider, How To Study History, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1967), pp. 161-164

[16]Jackdaws are available from Grossman Publishers, 125a East 19th Street, New York City. An excellent and inexpensive guide to research is Wood Grey, et al., Historian's Handbook (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964).

[17]The Junior College Journal is the publication of the American Association of Junior Colleges and generally carries articles on the newer techniques of classroom instruction. In addition to those previously cited, see: Robert J. Hardner and Don L. Pratton, "Curriculum Reform Through Behavioral Objectives", JCJ, 41:2 (October, 1970), pp. 12-16; Ervin L Harlicher and Eleanor Roberts, "Accountability for Student Learning", JCJ, 41:6 (March, 1971), pp. 27-30.

[18]Sister M. Adele Francis Gorman, O.S.F., AHA Newsletter, IX:3 (May, 1971), pp. 13-15.

[19]James R. Anderson, "Geography in the Two-Year Colleges", Junior College Journal, 41:5 (February, 1971), pp. 12-16; Michael F. Shugrue, "The National Study of English in the Junior College", Junior College Journal, 40:9 (June-July, 1970), pp. 8-12.